# The Black Cat

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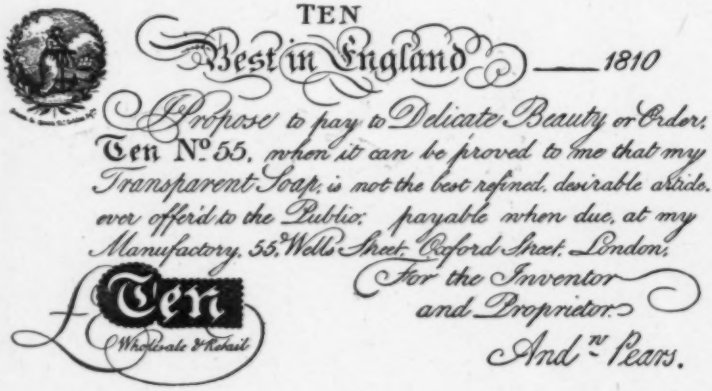
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# The Black Cat

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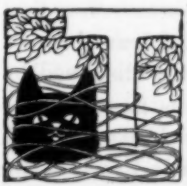
## An Understudy for a Princess.*

BY MIRIAM MICHELSON.



HE pepper to the extreme right. A crescent of small, oblong crackers curving in. Still on the right, half of a lemon. Farther toward the centre of the table a line of salt, with a knife laid at right angles. And dominating it all the empty salt cellar, reversed.

The waiter who served Arthur Jerdrum in his London club noted the familiar arrangement with a look of hopeless patience. Jerdrum had just gone out after sitting dreamily over his oysters till it got so late that the weary waiter thought he must have fallen asleep.

In the morning it would be the same, the perplexed waiter told himself. In place of the crackers there would be a bay-line of bread-crumbs, and a cube of sugar would mark the spot where the lemon had been the night before. And at dinner, whether he dined alone, as he usually did, or whether he brought with him a giant Boer whose imperfect speech was all of diamonds and greedy Uitlanders; or a hard-faced Antipodean who held forth on the dry fields of West Australia; or a turbaned, yellow-faced, full-lipped man, with whom he conversed in French; or a fat-faced, pros-

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perous-looking fellow who discussed Nevada mines and Texas cattle — still, after he and his guest had left the table, in front of Jerdrum's place there would be an indenting bay of broken, bent matches, a wine glass standing for the high peak to the right, and the rest of the well-known topographical features carefully, dreamily, smudged-in in cigar ashes on the smooth, white cloth.

Only once had this big young fellow with the burned, blond face and a cosmopolitan lack of nationality in his loose figure and reticent tongue, failed to leave the map behind him. This was when he came into the club with a brown-faced, black-moustached, liquid-eyed Hawaiian, and they talked in an odd, musical, vowel-full language, straight through the courses of which neither partook, both leaving the table suddenly while the waiter was absent. Then Jerdrum was not seen about the club for three days, at the end of which time he came back, and the waiter found a page from a time-table on the Scottish Highlands torn crescent-shaped and marked with blue pencil to the right, farther in again, straight across, and then again along the line.

No one would have been more surprised than Jerdrum himself had he known that his habit of thought was being disclosed by the automatic betrayal of his long, strong, nervous fingers. Yet the black man who had served him in Egypt and India, when he was surveying in advance of the railroad; the little French man-of-all-work whose invaluable services had ended in an asylum after they two had been lost on an Arizonan desert; the clever Chinese boy he had picked up in New Zealand — all of these could recall perfectly that same crescent-shaped bay with the familiar landmarks. Black Ali, though, remembered it as having been constructed of uncut, unpolished diamonds. Pierre knew it best as a half-circle of glistening sand, with pieces of string and broken bits of cactus for the landmarks. It dwelt in Ah Sing's retentive memory worked out in rich quartz crystals, with gold nuggets of various sizes to mark the positions from which the London waiter superciliously swept the lemon, the pepper caster and the salt cellar.

Ali made up his mind, after much ostentatious and official thinking, that the plan referred to a highly original and undoubtedly successful scheme for transportation, involving the use of a new and unknown motor.

Pierre smiled knowingly every time he saw the giant Dane absorbed in the work of his fingers. Her room, Pierre said to himself, was marked by the bright bit of red string, her husband's by the cactus thorn. The crescent was the roundabout path her lover must take to get to her — when the time should come.

Ah Sing had decided that it was a plan of the hiding-place of a great treasure. The cheerful little yellow man waited for years, patiently following Jerdrum about the world, expecting confidently that the time and place would come when and where the crescent of powdered quartz and the gold nuggets would reproduce themselves on a gigantic scale, when and where Ah Sing should be regretfully compelled to kill his big young master while he slept, and take possession of the mine himself.

But when Jerdrum sailed from London for Hawaii, he left the indignant Ah Sing behind him. And when he arrived in San Francisco, in the spring of '98, he had no servant with him.

. . . . . .

The Princess knitted her delicate brows. She stood meditating, a card in her hand.

The name was oddly familiar, but when or where she had heard it she could not remember. Arthur Jerdrum! Arthur Jerdrum! How absurd! At the name, the memory of the Islands she had not seen for years grew strong within her. By some strange trick of memory, that odd name seemed associated with the plash of the deep blue summer sea of Honolulu, with the scarlet hibiscus, with the pale, perfumed yellow of the ginger flower, with the waving reflections of tall, graceful cocoanut palms in the still water, with the soft, moist warmth of Hawaii, with all that luxury of tropical island scenery that had surrounded Kaiulani's childhood.

"But, Kaiulani, just how long are you going to stand there while the boy waits?"

It was Lilia's voice that roused the Princess from her reverie.

Kaiulani sighed. "Not a moment longer, Lilia. Father is waiting for me. I cannot see this gentleman. You see him, Lilia. I should remember his name, I know. Tell him — tell him —"

"I'll tell him how sorry you'll be when you hear that he has called in your absence," laughed Lilia. "But, truly, if I were Princess of Hawaii, I'd enjoy seeing everybody that called."

"Well, play princess, dear. Tell this stranger that you are Kaiulani, Princess of Nowhere. He'll not know the difference, and you'll have the pleasure — "

"You might be Queen of Somewhere, if you'd listen just once," answered Lilia, her voice trembling with eagerness. "I'm sure it could be done, Kaiulani. Just say once to the Hawaiians — "

"Lilia, you poor, nonsensical little Lilia, you're the most rabid royalist I ever met. Shall we fight the United States, dear, you and I? Shall we compel the world to see things as we see them? Shall we make ourselves the laughing-stock of the world with another puny rebellion in the so-called Republic of Hawaii, and let our enemies triumph over us even more than they do now? Hush! There comes Mr. — Mr. Jerdrum. I'll slip out this way."

The Princess turned to leave the room. She stopped with her hand upon the bedroom door.

"I know now," she whispered hurriedly. "Jerdrum was half-scientist, half-civil-engineer; he came to the Islands in my uncle Kalakaua's time. He was the only man Liliuokalani ever trusted fully. And this is his son Arthur, my old playmate. Be nice to him. If it weren't for my engagement with father — Sh!"

The Princess closed the door softly behind her and Jerdrum entered from the hall.

"I hardly hoped you would see me," he said, taking the hand Lilia held out. "Our friendship dates back so long ago that I didn't know you'd recognize my name as that of your old playmate."

"So we were playmates?" asked Lilia amused, yet seized by a sudden whim to hear more before she should enlighten this man with the sincere voice and odd blue eyes.

Jerdrum took the chair she indicated. "Yes," he answered, "in Kalakaua's time. You have changed very much since then."

"How?" the girl asked curiously.

"Surely, your Highness — "

Mechanically, Lilia made a disclaiming gesture.

"Isn't it like old times?" Jerdrum asked, with his peculiar short laugh. "When we quarrelled, I used to call you 'Your Highness,' and then you wouldn't speak to me."

"But how have I changed?" The coquettish blood of genera-

tions of French grandmothers leapt to the cheek of this half-Hawaiian girl. All the woman in her challenged comparison with the beautiful Princess Kaiulani.

Jerdrum drew a small card from his pocket and passed it to her. It was a photograph of a girl of twelve, whose exceeding slenderness and inquiring, large soft eyes reminded one of the ungainly immaturity of a young deer.

Lilia looked long at the picture. She hardly saw the childish features of Kaiulani. Mentally she was putting in place of this youthful face, the graceful, proud head of the Princess as she had just seen it, and for the first time, with the consciousness of Kaiulani's beauty, came an unhappy, a miserable feeling of envy.

"Do you remember the day you gave me this?" Jerdrum asked, amused at her long inspection of the photograph.

"It is so long ago," murmured Lilia, with down-drooped eyes. Something she had never felt before she experienced now when Jerdrum looked admiringly at her.

"And so much has happened since then," he went on. "It may be the influence of a childhood at court, but I have not been able to outgrow old loyalty to your family, Princess."

The words were simple, but the tone touched a chord in Lilia's faithful heart. For the moment, forgetting the part she was playing, the romantic girl put out her hand impulsively to thank him. Jerdrum took the slender little brown hand and raised it to his lips. But this mimic princess had not become accustomed to her royalty. There was something personal to her in the action, fearfully, deliciously personal. The blood suffused her dusky cheeks, and her guilty heart beat so that she hardly heard Jerdrum's words.

"I have wanted to see you to tell you this," he said. "My father took me back to Denmark a few months after you left Honolulu. And then he went to Ceylon and then to South America, and, of course, I went with him. Once when you were in London, not so long ago, I was there, too. I tried to see you, followed you to Scotland, but you had left the week before. I — cannot tell you how it seems to me to see you again. You are part of my childhood, Princess. My father is dead — years ago. I have not a tie in the world, and the memory of that happy time in beautiful Hawaii lingers so pleasantly in my mind."

Lilia did not speak. The simplest thing — to tell this man that she had been "playing princess" — seemed now the most impossible. So she waited, drifting helplessly with the tide his conversation took.

He sat and talked as a solitary man will when he meets a sympathetic listener. He told stories of the adventurous life he had led, living over in the young girl's eager interest days of peril and nights of watchfulness. And her presence, her sympathetic silence lent a charm of romance to that which, in living, had at times been merely squalid or wearisome or distasteful.

"But, in the midst of it all, when I heard of the wrong done to you and to Hawaii, Princess — "

"I am not a princess," interrupted Lilia with sudden contempt for the part she was playing.

Jerdrum misunderstood her. And the emotion in the sweet Hawaiian voice brought the words from him that he had not expected to say.

"It is true. You are not a princess, Kaiulani. You have no realm, no royal family, no hope for the future. But you may be Queen. You shall be Queen, if you will only say the word. Listen, only listen patiently to me. I am not a dreamer. I know what I am promising. If you will let me work for you, the greedy Americans will never get possession of Hawaii. The throne shall be restored and you shall grace it, Queen Kaiulani."

It seemed to Lilia that all her senses were merged into one. She could only listen, her unseeing eyes bent upon his strong, long fingers which, straying about the table, had unconsciously shaped the wool escaped from Lilia's workbasket into a semicircle. To the extreme right of this, the silver-topped inkstand had been moved. Farther to the left an indentation was marked by a gay worsted ball. The pearl-topped slender penholder had been placed level, with the paper cutter at right angles, and behind it stood the tiny clock enamelled in forget-me-nots.

"When Liliuokalani was dethroned," he was saying, "had there been but one man near her, one strong, brave man whom she trusted implicitly, the monarchy would never have been lost. If my father had been in Honolulu at that time, Liliuokalani would be reigning there now. But this is all past. The thing is the future. You

know, you must know, your advisers must realize, that if the Islands were once again in the possession of the natives, all thought of annexation to the United States would be out of the question. If you will agree, Princess; if you will trust me, if you will only be your own brave self, you shall be seated on the throne, and if for only one hour you are recognized as Queen of Hawaii, on what pretext will a foreign power dare to interfere?"

Lilia had risen. She had altogether forgotten the rôle she was playing. Her ardent nature was fired by Jerdrum's words. She had dreamed of a restoration. She had almost quarrelled with her idolized Princess, whose Scotch father had threatened that he would separate her from Kaiulani, if she did not learn to control the expression of her enthusiastic, uncompromising royalism. To hear her own thoughts, the dream which in her had been derided, uttered by this determined-looking young fellow, whose voice, whose manner of speech was so fervent, so belief-inspiring, transported the girl till she hardly knew what she was doing or saying.

"Oh, if you can do it! If you will — my life, my fortune — oh, what could I do to prove to you — "

Jerdrum caught the fluttering hands she held out to him. "I knew it! I knew it!" he exclaimed. "They told me you were cold. They hinted that you had grown politic, that you valued more the allowance doled out to you by these usurpers than you did your right to the crown. But I never believed it, never! I knew you too well, Kaiulani. The girl who read and studied and played with me — I knew that girl better than others."

And then Jerdrum told his plan. For years he had recognized this scheme of his for Kaiulani's succession to the Hawaiian throne only as a dream, a sort of mental puzzle, an outlet for his imagination. Now that, for the first time, he put into words the details his mind had built up day by day, he saw that what had been first merely exercise for his active brain, food for his adventurous craving for power and action, had become perfected into plausibility, even probability.

Given a group of islands, isolated from the world because of lack of cable facilities, and a small, usurping oligarchy, doomed to fall in time by the weight of its own jealous particles, if no great nation should intervene, and ruling by sheer exercise of military

strength an inimical, wronged native race outnumbering the white men twenty to one; given a determined, courageous leadership, money, a just cause, and the legitimate sovereign; given the effective appeal to sympathy and sensibility made by a beautiful maiden Queen, fair in face as her Caucasian father, Hawaiian in instinct and allegiance as her brown mother, refined with European culture, forgiving, gracious and amiable, a stranger to all the local hates and fears, biases and revengeful desires of the petty, bitter civil war, which the old Queen had seemed to embody; given that Queen's abdication in favor of her niece, an abdication of a form that could become substance only after it had been parted with; given all this, and Jerdrum was willing to risk his life in proving his postulates.

"Here is the harbor of Honolulu," he concluded, his eyes suddenly taking note of the work his hands had done unbidden. "Here is Diamond Head, where arms may be smuggled ashore. Here is your place, Princess, at Waikiki, where they shall be delivered. At this point and at this, telephone and telegraph wires shall be cut. Here is the Government Building, of which ten thousand armed Hawaiians shall take possession in a night, almost without bloodshed, for the native police are with us the moment their Queen shall call upon them.

"Before our enemies can communicate with any vessel in the harbor, the monarchy will be re-established and no foreign power may interfere. Then you will make me your minister of war. perhaps, Princess, and after that, if the Kanaka lets the independence of his country slip through his fingers, the white man is welcome to it."

. . . . . .

*Letter from Princess Kaiulani to a Friend in San Francisco.*

MY DEAR PAULIA: Pardon my neglect. I intended to write you months ago, but, thanks to that tireless small person Lilia, we have been junketing all about the Pacific. I cannot account for Lilia's passion for going about, but, since we have been at the Islands, there is not a town, not a plantation that we have not visited. We have toured the Islands from Lehua to Hilo. You'd laugh at Lilia. She seems to be possessed with a fever for meeting and talking to every native Hawaiian on the Islands. You know how prettily she speaks the language; and how winning a coax she is is evidenced by the fact of my having accompanied her on most of her excursions. The result is — not what you might expect, that the people are in love with her, but that they are mad with loyalty

for me! That arch-royalist Lilia infects everybody she meets, it seems to me. She never wearies of singing my praises. She goes about spending her mother's great fortune in doing good in my name. And she appears to be living in some sort of dream which I cannot understand. For, of course, we know, my dear, how hopeless the case is. And yet I find myself — the real sufferer — abstaining from clouding Lilia's hopes, feeling a kind of ridiculous sympathy for the mad little Jacobite who never will learn reason.

All this about Lilia has a purpose. I wish you could come down and perhaps look after her a bit. She was always responsive to your control, because of the passionate reverence she has for her dead mother's dearest friend. This madness may be but a fleeting emotional attack, due to the revisiting our old home, which she has not seen for years.

We are to give a great ball a week from to-night. It is Lilia's birthday, and she has begged for possession of my home for one night. You should see the place. That extravagant young person has spent six months' allowance in perfecting arrangements. I never dreamed how eager she is for pleasure. Everybody in town is invited, and on the lawns supper is to be served to the natives, who will come from as far as Kauai. There are to be songs and dances for them, and you'd think it was to be Waikiki's birthday, instead of Lilia's, such gifts she is planning for everybody.

There is something else that I must tell you. I fancy — I need not tell you, Paulia, that to no one else would I tell this — that Lilia has lost her heart down here in Honolulu. It may not be serious as yet, but there is a Mr. Jerdrum, whom oddly I have not met, that Lilia is much interested in. They correspond, I know, and meet occasionally. There could be nothing clandestine about Lilia, and Jerdrum is a gentleman, I'm sure. All my aunt's friends here are devoted to him. But Lilia is the most romantic girl I ever knew. It is such a pity that her father's sudden death provided no guardian for her. She is too young to be mistress of a fortune, and — well, come down, if you can.

KAIULANI.

You know — or do you know — that she has sold her sugar plantation on Maui?

. . . . . .

"Knowest thou, O Kanui, what things these are we carry down to Waikiki all the nights this week and last?"

The old Kanaka looked a moment toward his companion in the stern of the boat. But the night was black and the sea was black, and Hopu's face was hidden.

"Knowest thou, O Kanui," the younger man began again, this time in a whisper, "that my brother Honolii, the runner, sped all one night some weeks ago with a secret message, and that chiefs from all the seven seas were gathered at Hilo when he got there?"

The powerful old Kanaka leaned forward to shift the weight that lay heavy at the bottom of the long boat.

"Knowest thou, O Kanui, the white giant on the schooner

yonder who bade us deliver these — these cases at Waikiki. knowest thou that he too was at Hilo that night with the chiefs?"

Kanui bent to his oars. The necklace of ginger flowers about his massive neck rose and fell with the violence of his exertion. Hopu rowed too, his naked brown back bending over the long muffled oars.

"Knowest thou, Kanui," he murmured after a short silence, "that when a chief bade Jeradaruma show his authority, the white man showed before them all the royal feather lei of Kaiulani, and — and Kanui, he showed them, too, the writing of Liliuokalani giving up the throne."

Cautiously the boat drew close to shore. Hopu drew in his oars and Kanui waded out into the water and pulled the boat in. Noiselessly, the long heavy cases were carried up the slope and stored in the basement of the great pavilion. And then, when Hopu turned to walk again down to the water's edge, the silent Kanui fell upon him, gagging and binding him fast; and carefully dragging him over the pavilion's threshold, he closed the door and locked it after him.

"Naught knows Kanui," the old man muttered, shaking his head as he hurried noiselessly down to the boat. "Naught, save that the tongue of Hopu wags too much."

. . . . . .

At the door of the small pavilion Lilia Lauzon and Jerdrum stood alone, he looking down upon her with a puzzled frown.

"If — if you regret it all, Princess," he said at last slowly, "there is yet time to go back. No one knows positively anything that could compromise you except the twelve loyal men at the house yonder, who would die rather than betray you. As to myself, I will be blamed for it all, and I can leave on the schooner before anything becomes known."

The girl was so preoccupied with her own thoughts that the bitterness in his voice escaped her.

There was a long silence, and then Lilia spoke.

"Mr. Jerdrum," she said wistfully, "it has all suddenly come to seem so impossible, so fantastic. Be patient with me, and — and reassure me, if you can, for, truly, I could die for the success of it all."

"I swear we will succeed," Jerdrum answered. "Everything is ready. Shall I go over —"

"No, no, I know it all by heart. All day I think of it. All night I dream of it, and always I dream that we have won, and — and that Queen Kaiulani reigns."

"If she will give the word now," Jerdrum answered, his old enthusiasm waking at the thrill in her low voice, "the sun will rise to-morrow on the first day of her reign."

"If — if she will give the word," Lilia repeated dreamily. "If she will — will she? Oh, will she?"

She turned from him and gazed almost prayerfully at the great flower-wreathed pagoda on the east side of the villa, where a sudden illumination of electric lights displayed the queenly, graceful figure of the Princess in her white evening gown, long necklaces of deep yellow flowers about her shoulders, and on her deer-like head a coronal of the same color.

A hoarse shout from hundreds of Hawaiian throats greeted her.

"She is very popular," Jerdrum said, surprised. "Why should the people care so much for Miss Lauzon?"

"Why, indeed," repeated Lilia bitterly. "Why should anybody care for Miss Lauzon? Except me. I care, and now, before we go one step further she must know."

"Why, surely," interrupted Jerdrum, detaining her, "Miss Lauzon must already know. You remember that all my letters were addressed to her, all of our meetings were arranged through her. It was she who —"

"Oh!" Lilia stamped her foot in a fury of hysterical impatience. "You don't understand. Will you wait for me here? I may be gone half an hour. When I come back, it will be decided; then I'll tell you."

She ran swiftly toward the house, leaving Jerdrum looking after the small flying figure, a perplexed frown on his face.

She had not seemed herself this evening, he thought. What potent influence had this tall, imperious Miss Lauzon over the small Princess he meant to serve. Why should she be consulted at such a time as this?

Jerdrum paced up and down in the darkness. To the left the natives were dancing now and singing hulas, the very spirit of

action made music. He watched the hurrying dark figures and listened to the strong, sweet voices of the Hawaiian boys, who strummed their instruments and sang, their muscular brown feet moving in sympathy with the motion of the dancers. How well they stood! What strong, fine figures they were! How well they had fought once! How well they would fight again to be released from the tyrannous oligarchy that had despoiled and enslaved them!

From the house strains of civilized hulas, become waltzes and polkas, came to his ears, and between the waving palms Jerdrum caught glimpses of women in evening gowns and men in white duck as well as those in sombre black. The brilliantly lit pagoda was filled now with a crowd of people, white, brown and all intermediate shades, who promenaded or sat and chatted, or passed on toward the ball-room or to the banqueting room beyond. He could not distinguish figures in that crowd, but his eyes flitted from one group to the other, searching for the two girls in whose hands, just for a moment, lay the fate of this small, isolated nation in the South Seas.

Jerdrum stepped back into the small pavilion. He took from his pocket the list of those who had secretly bound themselves to the Princess's cause. One by one, he scanned them, weighing each and every possibility of failure. No, it was all complete. Twelve royalists would remain after all the guests had departed; twelve men who realized that now or never must they regain their country. Before them Kaiulani must assume sovereignty, before these twelve who had sworn to die or conquer her kingdom for her. And each of these twelve could vouch for a thousand.

Restlessly, Jerdrum walked up and down. Now, that the end had come, he felt an odd sort of regret for the companionship — more in thought than in actual presence, for Jerdrum had spent little time at the capital — the companionship which, too, would be at an end. This enthusiastic, generous, brave little co-conspirator would never again meet him on the old footing. As he looked back now upon their exchange of opinions in a few hurried meetings and many long letters, he said to himself that never had there been a revolution planned upon such simple lines; never had there been such exceeding faith, such open-handed generosity on

one side, and such assurance of victory on the other. Up to to-night she had been more like a boy, he said to himself, an ardent, reckless, but high-minded lad than —

But just at this point in his reverie the door opened and she stood before him. Her face was white as the gown she wore, but upon either cheek flamed a spot of red, deep as the spicy carnations which were festooned about her shoulders and in her dark hair. She came slowly forward and with her hands clasped tightly, and her soft eyes fixed upon Jerdrum's face, she said piteously:

"Forgive me. Oh, forgive me! Think of all this means to me. Think of what I have lost to-night, and please, please don't you, too, punish me."

"Kaiulani," exclaimed Jerdrum, in alarm, "what has happened? Nothing is lost — "

"Listen," said Lilia. "I am not the Princess. I am Lilia Lauzon. I have deceived you. All this time I have deceived you. Oh, I beg you to believe that it was not my own folly that led me to do it, but my love and my loyalty to her."

For a moment Jerdrum thought either he or she must be mad. His head was swimming. He looked at the pleading little figure before him, and in its place he seemed to see the proudly graceful girl who had appeared a moment in the pagoda.

"You are joking!" he stammered.

Slowly she shook her head.

"You can't be serious!" he exclaimed. "What is it? Has all this strain been too much for you? You are so changed — "

"No, I am not mad. I wish I were," she answered.

"Well!" he exclaimed, "at least she knows — "

"Oh, yes, she knows everything now," Lilia said, bitterly, sinking into a rustic chair. "She knows it all, and she says she will never forgive me."

"You told her just now — just this evening?"

Lilia looked directly at him. She nodded.

Jerdrum stood looking down upon her. In his face amazement, inexpressible indignation and rage were blended. For a full minute there was silence. Then Jerdrum laughed shortly.

"What a fool you've made of me!" he exclaimed.

She did not answer. She lay back in the chair, her eyes bent

on the floor, her hands clasped together in quiet, desperate agony. Her silence enraged him.

"Do you realize what you've done?" he demanded. "What will these men think of me, these men who have put their lives into my hands — and yours? And the money — "

"How dare you!" she said, lifting her eyes suddenly. "The money was my own. And I sold the plantation — the house where my mother died for — for this."

"But the Princess has been in ignorance all this time. All our plans — we have used her name — what must she think!"

"She thinks that I am all your words seem to imply. Oh, well, it makes no difference now. It — it only seems strange that even you should — it is all over. Good-bye."

"You can't go like that," he said, almost roughly, intercepting her before she could reach the door. "You are angry with me. But can't you see how bewildered I am? Can't you understand how strangely I find myself placed? And the Princess — "

"Oh, of course, all your sympathy is for her!" Lilia exclaimed, her eyes blazing now with jealous wrath. "Why can't you pity me? This hurts me worse than it does her — or you. See how little she cares! When you came that day and mistook me for her, it all came to me in a moment how I might serve her in spite of herself. I hoped that if I planned and arranged it all, if I could show her results, I could convince her that she might have the throne merely by reaching out her hand for it. It seemed providential that you supposed I was the Princess, and I — I told you then what a silly thing I am! Remember, when you asked me could we trust Lilia Lauzon, and send letters through her, I said to you, 'She's sentimental, unpractical, nonsensical, people say. But she wouldn't weigh her worthless life one moment in the balance if — if— ' "

She stopped, and waited deliberately till she could control her voice.

"And I wouldn't," she went on. "You believe this much? And I did throw myself heart and soul into this. And to-night when I — I told her, she looked at me as though she thought me mad, and she declared that I had done a base, an unwarrantable thing. And it was all for her! Oh, will you not believe it was all for her?"

She was sobbing now and fell back in her chair, a prey to misery.

Jerdrum stood looking at her. But his eyes hardly saw how young and pretty and miserable she was as she lay with a soft, childishly-rounded arm raised to cover her face. His mind was busy planning retreat, not for himself so much as for those others waiting even now for word from him. His odd blue eyes clouded with thought, his fingers strayed restlessly over the rustic table beside him, reproducing again, now that the reality no longer monopolized his mind, that crescent-shaped bay, the bold peak at its entrance, the villa far in, the street, the barracks and the rest — all in the feathery petals of the carnations that had fallen from Lilia's throat.

"Oh, if she had been the Princess!" The regret punctuated the thread of his thought, busy now surmounting one obstacle after another. "There had been something so royal in this girl, so manly, so stanch a comrade, so merrily brave, so daringly devoted, so — "

And all at once Jerdrum's eyes saw the graceful girlish figure, upon which they had looked a moment too long. With one long-drawn breath of regret, he swept the map of petals from the table. After all, the thing for which he had toiled, the thing which had monopolized his thought for all these past years was of no consequence. The vitally important thing now was that this girl should look up, should cease to sob, should smile up at him. With every second his distress grew, till his heart seemed aflame with impatient suffering. When he found himself at Lilia's side, stroking the soft brown hair and murmuring words of consolation and endearment, he understood at length what had befallen him.

. . . . . .

There is an old Kanaka named Kanui who delivered an extraordinary message in Hawaiian to twelve suspicious Hawaiian gentlemen, standing irresolute at the gates of Kaiulani's villa late one night two years ago and, without waiting for an answer, ran swiftly to the water's edge, whence he rowed a man and woman up the bay to a small schooner, just ready to weigh anchor.

There is another Kanaka named Hopu who believes that he was very drunk for two whole weeks, during which time he imagined

that he rowed back and forth every night and all night from Diamond Head to Kaiulani's villa.

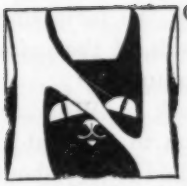
There are six of these same Hawaiian gentlemen who do not believe in "praying to death," as did their mothers and fathers. They wish they did, though, for then they might effectively punish a Dane, whom they include in their list of unforgivable foreigners — although they admit that Jerdrum's father was not a missionary.

There are six other Hawaiian gentlemen who believe that a dangerous lunatic named Jerdrum is permitted to live, quite at large, in San Francisco.

There is still a mystery in Hawaiian commercial circles as to the origin of Bamberger's fortune — that Bamberger who sold arms and ammunition, which no one dreamed he possessed, to the Filipinos. Kanui, though, could tell where he got them.

# The Man with the Red Pants.*

BY HARLE OREN CUMMINS.



O one knew who he was, from whence he came, nor what was his purpose. He was first seen to jump from a cab at the corner of Milk and Washington Streets, light a cigar and turn his steps toward Newspaper Row. A reporter, who was among those who saw him alight, was, like the others, convulsed with laughter, and hesitating for a moment between an impulse to follow the extraordinary spectacle and a professional instinct to question the cab driver, lost sight of the latter and finally turned and joined the crowd. This is what they saw:

A man above the medium height, with shoulders and head that seemed narrow from contrast with the lower part of the figure — to which all eyes were turned — and appeared even smaller by reason of a diminutive hat set upon a plentiful shock of glossy black hair. It was from the waist down that this man differed entirely in appearance from all others of his kind. Where men customarily wear trousers, this stranger appeared to be enveloped in two fiery bags.

In the alternations of fashion since the fifties, the community had become familiar with every width of trouser leg, from the skin-tight to the pegtop and the Zouave amplitude of the first year of the Civil War, but nothing like the nether garment of this man had ever been seen. It fell in great plaits, folds and cascades of cloth to within an inch of the ground, resembling the drapery of a myriad skirt dancer or the robe of a whirling dervish more than the attire of civilized man. There were yards, ells, a whole web, it seemed, in those bag-like monstrosities. Even had they been of quiet Quaker drab, they would have attracted attention anywhere. But they were red. Not an ordinary, conservative tint, but the violent, glowing crimson of a summer sunset.

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In the confusion of the innumerable exciting events of the years that have since elapsed that first vision of the Man with the Red Pants — as he was immediately called — has never been entirely obliterated, and will readily be recalled.

Unmindful of the commotion he was creating, the man strolled leisurely down the street, pausing to read the newspaper bulletins as he went, and ignoring both the curious gaze of the increasing crowd and the pointed sarcasms and derisive yells of the noisy newsboys of Pi Alley, where he halted for some minutes.

Turning back at that point, he resumed his walk up Washington and Winter Streets and crossed the Common to the Public Garden, where he hired a swan-boat and was paddled slowly about the pond, to the delight of the nursemaids and their charges. At five o'clock a cab from the stand at the Park Square Station drove to the Church Street entrance of the garden, where the Subway now begins, took up the Man with the Red Pants and drove rapidly away.

Next morning's papers contained a full description of the peculiar stranger and his movements of the previous day, but no reporter had been able to extract from the man more than the statement that his name was Jeremiah Sweet, that this was his first visit to Boston, where he intended to see the chief places of interest, and that he had absolutely no connection with any theatrical or advertising concern. All the accounts included an apparently casual remark that he should visit the Old State House and Faneuil Hall at two o'clock that afternoon. The consequence was that before half-past one that day the scene of the Boston Massacre was more densely crowded than on the memorable night when Attucks fell, while a mob lined Washington Street, filled Dock Square and rendered the short cut through 'Change Alley absolutely impassable. A special detail of officers had to be hurried from the Court Square Station to keep open a passage for ordinary traffic, but it was not able to prevent a blockade of street cars, extending from Haymarket Square to Milk Street.

Promptly at two o'clock a cab forced its way through the throng and deposited at the eastern entrance of the Old State House the object of all this intense public interest.

"There he is!" "He's come!" The news rapidly spread, and

the crowd surged nearer, jostling the stannger as he entered the building. After an absence of a few minutes — neither long enough for a careful inspection of the antiquarian relics within nor for a dispersion of the spectators — the man with the fiery apparel reappeared, and through a solid lane of gaping, staring people made his way on foot to Faneuil Hall, where a similar scene was enacted. Throughout his visit to these historical buildings the man maintained the same unruffled demeanor, which was much commented upon by the newspapers, all of which devoted increased space to the Man with the Red Pants, one of the more enterprising printing a story illustrated with a cut in red ink.

Jeremiah Sweet remained in Boston a week, visiting many places of antiquarian interest, including the "Paul Revere" Church and the Copp's Hill Burying-Ground, finally extending his sight-seeing to Bunker Hill, Dorchester Heights and the Washington Elm. He went by the most devious ways, in order, he informed the reporters — in advance — to avoid publicity, but he never expressed any wonder that they printed his confidential hints and that larger and larger crowds congregated in consequence.

The city authorities were at a loss how to deal with this extraordinary and unwelcome guest, who required a daily police detail. He was undoubtedly sane, peaceable and well-behaved. He neither said nor did anything abnormal. His only offence was his "pants," as people called them, though if there ever was a full garment deserving a full name, it was that one. The city solicitor informed the head of the police department — by request — that persons clad in the garb of their sex cannot be constrained in the choice of cut and color, and no remedy seemed to exist, unless a vague charge of creating a public nuisance could be sustained.

In the midst of the excitement thus occasioned, the Man with the Red Pants went away as suddenly and as quietly as he had come. A few days later he was heard from, promenading the streets of New York, where he attracted even greater attention. Preceded by gratuitous press advertising, he journeyed slowly by way of Philadelphia and Baltimore to Washington. He arrived at the national capital at the climax of an exciting session, and at

once distracted public attention from affairs of state. Many persons at the capital asserted that the man's face looked familiar, but as Washington's population comes from all parts of the Union, this fact afforded no clue to Sweet's antecedents.

Leaving Washington with the adjournment of Congress and the approach of hot weather, the Man with the Red Pants was next reported enjoying the breezes of Lake Michigan at Chicago. He was now at the height of a national notoriety, and a large sum was offered him to become a permanent attraction at an approaching World's Fair. This offer he declined, as he had refused numerous other similar propositions. He said that he had nothing to say, nothing to sell, and especially nothing to give away, and in the excitement and bustle attending the opening of the exposition he became lost to public view. But in the newspaper offices of the land, and in the memory of many thousands of citizens, he remained one of the unique figures of the nineteenth century.

With the dawn of the twentieth, however, his star promises to emerge from its long occultation and outshine the brilliancy of its former appearance. Here are the facts:

Early in the spring of 1901, numerous workmen appeared one morning, tearing out the interior of a building near the corner of a busy street leading from Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D. C. From day to day the working force increased, and it was seen that extensive alterations and improvements were to be made. Now, the building had long been a source of gossip and speculation among local real-estate men. For many years it had been vacant, its last occupant having been, it was understood, its owner. When he took possession he had displayed a modest sign, inscribed in plain gilt letters:

J. SWEET, TAILOR,
ORIGINATOR OF MEN'S FASHIONS.

After a lapse of time it was noticed that this had been altered to read:

J. SWEET, TAILOR,
ORIGINATOR OF WOMEN'S MODES.

It has been a matter of dispute whether this wording remained unchanged one entire season or not, but it is certain that it was followed by the inscription:

J. SWEET, TAILOR,
ORIGINATOR OF CHILDREN'S COSTUMES.

This version had a shorter life than either of the others, and when it was taken down the sign was not replaced, but the windows of the building were boarded up.

In the course of events, the site became quite a desirable one for business purposes, and was sought by a number of merchants, but they could obtain no trace of owner or agent from any of the real-estate brokers of the city. Inquiry at the registry of deeds and of the tax collector only revealed the facts that the estate stood in the name of Jeremiah Sweet, and that the taxes were regularly paid by mail from various localities.

These facts were remembered when the renovation of the building began, but contractors and foremen were questioned in vain for further particulars. All queries were answered with a grin and a gesture toward a conspicuous notice, taking the place of the customary plumbers' and plasterers' advertisements:

WATCH THIS BUILDING!

The great American public, being above all others amenable to suggestion, of course complied, and crowds collected daily, obstructing the street as they watched the workmen add another story to the structure.

Interest grew when the temporary sign was replaced by another reading:

THIS BUILDING WILL BE OCCUPIED BY
THE MAN WITH THE RED PANTS.

To the younger generation this announcement was in itself sufficiently striking, while among the many who remembered the sensation of former years it created, of course, much greater excitement. Reporters, not only from the local papers but from the Washington bureaus of every leading journal in the country, were

assigned to the task of watching the premises and getting the first interview with the hidden Jeremiah Sweet. But not one of them got a "scoop." When the new building was completely ready for occupancy, and not till then, every newspaper man in the city received by mail an elaborate invitation to meet the Man with the Red Pants on the premises. They assembled at the designated time in an elegantly appointed office, to be received by a fine-looking middle-aged man, in an irreproachable business suit, who told them this story:

When a boy, he said, he had been left, an orphan, to the care of a distant relative, a leading merchant tailor of New York City, a kindly man of limited education but great common sense. This relative was resolved that Jeremiah should have the advantages which he himself had lacked, and the lad was accordingly sent to a preparatory school and thence to college, whence he was graduated with credit.

"Now, my boy," said the proud relative, "there's money in the bank for a post-graduate course. Which have you decided to be, a doctor or a lawyer?"

"Neither," replied Jeremiah. "I have studied other things as well as books — you among them — and I am convinced that I can do no better than to become a tailor!"

When his benefactor had recovered from the surprise, vexation, wrath and other mixed emotions evoked by this speech, he was completely mollified and even flattered by Jeremiah's explanation. From childhood's days, when he had watched the old man's head cutter reproducing the same ugly patterns, year after year, varying only from spring to fall, Jeremiah Sweet had conceived the idea that there was a future and a fortune for the man who had the knowledge, artistic talent and business ability to make himself the arbiter of men's fashions, and he resolved to be that man. This plan he unfolded to the old tailor, who entirely approved, and when he died somewhat suddenly a few months later he left the bulk of his wealth to the young man.

It was then that Jeremiah Sweet bought the Washington property, with the idea of directing national fashions from the nation's capital of culture and leisure. There never had been, he reasoned, any national costume, nor anything distinctly American in dress.

While boasting originality in everything, Americans have from the earliest Colonial days followed with abject servility the fashion-makers of London and Paris. This condition of things he determined to change, and to effect this revolution solely on the intrinsic merits — combining convenience, utility and beauty — of the styles which he should introduce. Being a water-color artist of more than average ability, his original designs for clothing were charming pictures as well as anatomically accurate fashion plates. When displayed in his windows they attracted throngs. Men from the Departments and from the Legations — elegant men of the world — came in by the score, admired, praised and departed.

"Very artistic," "decidedly original," exclaimed the ladies, after the first sign had given way to its successor, but when they were ready to order costumes for an official or society function they went elsewhere and eagerly paid for second-hand copies of the "creations" of the famous couturières of the old world.

"Perhaps," said Jeremiah Sweet to his auditors, "I should have known that women are even more slavishly imitative than men in matters of fashion, but when it came to the question of children's dress — about which the child has nothing to say — I certainly thought that maternal pride and a desire to have her offspring outshine those of all other women would inspire every mother with an appreciation that would ensure me success in a field theretofore untilled. Long before a little Lord Fauntleroy was ever thought of, I had designed the most picturesque and beautiful of children's costumes. I drew and displayed serviceable and handsome modifications of mediæval dress, sailors' suits and military effects — but all without avail. Every mother admired and coveted, but none dared order what was not 'the fashion.'

"Then, suddenly and sharply, I realized that popularity springs not from merit, but from notoriety — in tailoring as in every other profession — just as a woman may struggle in vain for recognition on the stage until, as the heroine of a scandal or the divorced wife of a notable, she herself becomes notorious — and then popular. So I determined to become notorious, and did so, easily and quickly, as 'The Man with the Red Pants.' After that, I was determined to become popular.

"You know how cheaply I acquired a notoriety that would

itself have brought me a fortune in a dozen ways. I was willing to accept it in only one way — my own. So after closing my shop and touring the country in red pants one year, I shed them and spent three years in foreign travel, penetrating, by means of my good old relative's money and my own education, into the inner circles of the centres of Fashion and the very arcanum of the realm of Vogue, and became its dictator. For the past five years the civilized world has been dressing as I ordered, and Americans who fancied they were following the lead of 'The Prince' have really been wearing the clothes of the Man with the Red Pants. My crowning achievement is now to come. You know how the shirt waist for men leaped from London to New York in a single week. I am the man who originated the shirt waist for men. The coming season that sensible and comfortable garment will be more in evidence than ever. And I shall be famous.

"Now, gentlemen," said Sweet to his astounded hearers, "before I take you over my establishment, let me show you the sign that goes up to-morrow."

As he spoke he pulled the cover from a larger and finer sign than any of its predecessors, reading:

J. SWEET,
THE MAN WITH THE RED PANTS.
ORIGINATOR AND MANUFACTURER OF
MEN'S SHIRT WAISTS.

The three floors of the factory are now filled with workpeople of both sexes. Will the coming summer ripen a harvest of wealth for the only American who ever led American fashions?

# In the Sierra Madres.*

BY NEWTON NEWKIRK.

THURSTON believes himself to possess a singular intuition which enables him to select with marvellous accuracy those individuals through whose lives there are strange tales interwoven. Having picked his man he finds a keen delight in worming a story from him and was richly rewarded in the instance of Emilio Valquez.

Valquez came to New York from Mexico to study liquid air in its practical and scientific applications. This, alone, was sufficient to arouse Thurston's curiosity, which was further whetted by the Mexican's rare interest in his laboratory experiments with the mysterious fluid. When invited to Thurston's lodgings Valquez accepted with the eagerness of a child, but when his host warily approached the story of his life, he as warily evaded his questioner, who forbore until a more favorable opportunity.

It came rather unexpectedly after they had known each other several weeks. As Valquez lounged one evening in Thurston's apartments a glass of choice old wine unloosed his tongue and mellowed his mood to one of reminiscence.

"I prophesy that the potentialities of the new liquid air will outrival any the world has ever known — even steam and electricity," Thurston had said. Valquez flicked the ash from his cigarette and looked up quizzically.

"New?" There was the faintest flavor of a sneer in his tone. "New? Liquid air is by no means *new;* why, I have known of it for sixty years!"

For the instant it occurred to Thurston that the wine had a shade the better of his guest, but a clear eye and earnest manner contradicted the suspicion.

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"But, Valquez," he said smiling, "your age flatly contradicts the truth of your statement; you were certainly not an infant in arms sixty years ago; why, you had not even been born; you are not more than forty years old now."

The Mexican laughed lightly. Then his face sobered and he puffed his cigarette reflectively.

"You are complimentary, señor, but the fact remains that if I live until my next birthday, I shall be ninety years old."

Thurston looked at Valquez rather pityingly. Such a preposterous statement could not even be charged to the wine. It was rather a rebuke to his prided powers of discrimination not to have discovered the man's insanity until then. He looked at the black hair, which, according to the man's statement, should have been white as snow; then his eyes returned to a face which bore the vigor and strength of manhood's well preserved prime. At all events, he would hear this fanciful tale — would express incredulity and thus provoke talk. So he emphasized the one magic word:

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, you do not believe," Valquez retorted with spirit. "Well, you must — I have the proofs!" Then he paused dubiously. "But I have never told the story before; only one other knows — Antonio Pinguez; he was with me and is yet alive to corroborate my statements. Shall I tell you, as one gentleman tells a secret to another?"

Thurston assured him of his confidence and waited in keen anticipation for what was to follow. After all, he did not talk like an insane man; he appeared to be perfectly reasonable and rational as he spun his weird tale:

"I came of good family — there is the blood of Spanish nobility in my veins — but I do not boast of that. I was born in the City of Mexico in the year 1810 and had every advantage of early education and refinement. I was a rover by nature, but my father begged me to remain at home and succeed him in a governmental position, which I did at twenty. During the following five years I chafed and fretted under the restraint, and, unable to endure it longer, ran away from home. Antonio Pinguez, a comrade, upon whom the spirit of unrest had also seized, accom-

panied me. We determined to visit the United States and travelled rapidly northward. It was in Chihuahua we picked up José Raldarez — a roustabout — a runaway — more artful and experienced than either of us. With José we shared what little money we had left while we tarried in Chihuahua planning our expedition. Presently we found ourselves walking out of the town one evening with not a peseta among us. That night we stopped a lone horseman in the moonlight. José held a pistol at his head while Antonio and I went through his pockets with trembling fingers. We walked on until daylight, and, entering a small town, spent what we had stolen for provisions, firearms and ammunition. Then we fled into the mountains.

"That was the first step in a career of highway robbery and brigandage. We idled away the days in the fastnesses of the rocks; at nightfall we crept down to the lonely roads and lay in wait for travellers. What we took from them kept us comfortably, and easy triumphs behind cocked pistols made us bold.

"It was José who first discovered the cavern where we made our home for five years. It entered the mountain by an aperture large enough to admit a horse and then the passage gradually widened and led over three miles into the very heart of the Sierra Madres, where it terminated in a somewhat larger spherical chamber, solidly walled on every side by adamantine granite. Into this chamber we moved and lived, concealing the outside opening by artificial means. The chamber proved a dry, cool and most impregnable headquarters and in time we fitted it with every convenience money could procure, for we had enough currency at all times to gratify every extravagant fancy.

"During my school days the scientific branches had interested me greatly and in my new vocation I was enabled to devote much time to reading. By devious methods I secured such books as interested me until there was in our secret chamber a creditable library of science and standard fiction. Our trip to the States was postponed; there was something fascinating in the reckless, devil-may-care life of highwaymen. In the newspapers which we were able to get from time to time we read with much amusement of our daring exploits. Two rules we rigidly observed — never to take a human life unless in the extreme

necessity of saving our own; never to rob those who could ill afford to lose. By these unusual methods we became known as the 'Three Thieving Gentlemen!' Nevertheless, the government offered a large reward for our capture, alive or dead.

"In earlier years I had kept a daily journal of my life. After I ran away I attended to this duty even more faithfully, thinking, perhaps, I might write of my adventures in after years.

"One day — it was June 14, 1840 — I had just returned from a tramp to the opening of the passage whither I had gone to reconnoitre, and sat down to write in my journal. Outside the torrid sun blazed down with withering effect; far below me I had just seen the rocks quiver and dazzle in the terrible heat, but in the secret chamber the air was deliciously cool and bracing. Antonio played at solitaire over to my left, while José busied himself about a small blaze in one corner, in the preparation of our noonday meal. The big torch, suspended above, cast a cheerful glow about the chamber.

"Suddenly there came a low rumble which grew to a roar; the stone floor seemed to tremble and sink under me, while a cold gust swept into my face from the outside passage; then I suddenly seemed to chill strangely and found myself powerless to move. The last conscious object my vision closed upon was José standing rigid and terrified over the boiling pot.

"When I opened my eyes they were dazzled by an unaccustomed light. I looked upward and saw a newly riven cleft across the ceiling of the chamber, through which the light of day was streaming.

"'An earthquake shock, or some volcanic disturbance!'

"I spoke the words aloud and endeavored to rise, but my legs seemed cold and numb. After an effort I gained my feet, facing José — and José! — my God! — José lay before me on the stone floor in — in pieces! I instinctively sought my pistol in its holster, but the woodwork of the handle crumbled in my fingers. Had José been murdered? — Antonio? As I thought of Antonio I turned about swiftly to where I had last seen him playing solitaire. He still sat quietly with his arm raised and a card poised in his fingers as if pondering a doubtful play. Staggering to him I shook his shoulder and spoke his name. The card fell from his

hand, and, leaning wearily back in his chair, he looked up into my face in a stupid, dazed way, as if he had come out of a deep sleep.

"'Antonio — they have murdered José!'

"He answered inarticulately and endeavored to rise; I noted that he, too, found this difficult and gave him my hand; his fingers seemed cold as ice. Holding to each other we staggered together toward José and bent tremblingly over him.

"Poor José's head was lying three feet or more from the trunk; one arm appeared to have been broken off close to the shoulder and yet remained in the coat-sleeve; the other arm was cut up into several short sections and the fingers shattered into small pieces; one foot had been broken off at the ankle and remained in the shoe, which set flatly on the granite floor. We examined the severed parts more critically; they did not seem to have been cut by any sharp instrument; the bone-ends, too, appeared to have been broken; moreover, there was no evidence of a conflict; no tell-tale blood stains; no weapons.

"Dazed and terrified, Antonio and I looked into each other's faces and then more closely about us; the fire was dead and the mixture in the kettle partially frozen. I picked up a flagon of wine; it, too, was solid ice; the leaves of my journal were seared as with age, and the writing pale; our guns, stacked in one corner, were rusted, and the woodwork of their handles shrivelled and cracked. By a kind of tacit agreement we moved toward the exit.

"*There was no exit!*

"Where the long, roomy passage from the outside had entered the cavern, we faced a wall of solid granite. Then we both looked hopefully toward the cleft through which the sunlight was streaming. Antonio was thoughtful enough to fill his pocket with coin from our strong-box. After an hour's difficult scaling we stood in the open on the mountain's side, looking down into the great, dark crevice from which we had crawled.

"Turning about we beheld far below us a small town, and again we sought one another's faces in bewilderment; we had never seen this town. What did it all mean? Crouching stupidly on the edge of the rift we waited until darkness had fallen and then crept down the mountain toward the village, half expecting it to disappear as a mirage at our approach. On the outskirts we cau-

tiously entered a small eating-house. The few loungers stared at us curiously as we ordered something to eat, for we were both very hungry. We half expected to hear them discuss some of our latest escapades, as we had often heard others do, but the 'Three Thieving Gentlemen' were forgotten in their gabble about the earthquake shock which had riven the mountain that morning.

"On the table from which we ate lay a newspaper which I picked up to peruse. The first thing which caught my eye was the date. I seemed not able to read it correctly and drew the sheet closer to my eyes:

"'Merciful God!'

"As I gasped the words above my breath Antonio looked up quickly. I held my finger on the date of the newspaper and slowly pushed it toward him.

"'July 7, 1890!'

"As the words died on his lips his eyes sought mine in dumb appeal. While we gazed at one another across that table the almost unbelievable truth dawned on both of us —

"*We had been dead to the world in that mountain chamber — not an hour — not a day, but — fifty years!*

"We ate our repast in a dumb silence; the powers of reason seemed too puny to speedily grasp the marvellous truth and countless queries surged through our bewildered brains. When Antonio pushed a gold piece toward the proprietor, the latter picked it up and curiously turned it over.

"'An old one, señor, — where did you get it?'

"The question upset both of us, and with a mumbled explanation we hurried out of the restaurant and out of the town. For two days we tramped aimlessly northward. We found the country thickly populated. New towns and settlements had sprung up on every hand; customs and manners had undergone wonderful changes during the half century we had been buried. We found by covert enquiry that the people had long before ceased to talk of our daring robberies and that we were believed to be dead. Then we divided the money Antonio had brought from the cave and parted company. He continued northward into Texas, while I turned about and travelled back to the City of Mexico.

"Happily, no one knew me. I learned that every member of

my family had been dead many years and to their descendants I did not reveal myself. The inexplicable mystery of my fifty years' sleep haunted me strangely and I determined to devote my life to its solution. I took up the study of science with new interest and added to it the branches of physics and chemistry. Wishing to be near the cavern I removed to the small town where Antonio and I had first learned of our fifty years' imprisonment and made that my headquarters. Upon examination I found that the old-time passage leading from the mountain side into our chamber had been long closed, and learned from the government records that on June 14, 1840, there had been a violent earthquake disturbance through the Sierra Madres at that point. This satisfactorily accounted for the closing of the passage. As I sat writing in my journal on June 14, 1840, the shock caused the passage leading from the mountain side to our secret chamber to collapse. The ponderous granite slabs of the passage roof must have fallen from the outside toward the interior like a child's row of small blocks against one another, pushing the air of the three-mile passage ahead of them and compressing it with terrific force within the adamantine walls of the chamber.

"In my scientific research I found that if air is compressed, by forcing its molecules closer together, it becomes warm, and then, if a little of this compressed air is allowed to expand, what is left becomes very cold. I reasoned that if this process of compression and expansion were kept up to a sufficient degree the air would at last be reduced to a liquid condition. That the air in the cavern chamber was colder than a North-Pole temperature there is no doubt; how it was cooled or how cold it was I have no means of knowing.

"The identical force which imprisoned us during fifty years also liberated us, except that in the latter instance the disturbance rent our secret chamber and relieved the terrific air pressure; when normal conditions were restored we awoke. I have not yet solved the great secret of how the germ of life remained within us during the half century. I only know that when I awoke I seemed to begin to live at the point where I had gone to sleep. I can account for these conditions only on the theory of suspended animation; we must have been refrigerated — frozen to statues.

"José? — Ah, yes — poor José! You remember yesterday in your laboratory you submerged a piece of raw beef in liquid air; then you crumbled it to bits between your fingers. Well, José was the only one of the three on his feet when the shock came and as I closed my eyes he was yet standing rigid. José must have been frozen statuesque and after he had hardened like the piece of beef, he was probably upset and broken into pieces by some subsequent shock. The same fate must have befallen us if we had toppled over.

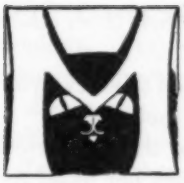
"Now you can appreciate why your experiments with liquid air here in the East have interested me. They seemed to offer a reasonable explanation of the mystery; so I am here. You must also admit I am ninety years old — eh, señor?"

. . . . . .

Although Thurston scarcely expects others to credit the strange story of Emilio Valquez, yet he believes it. He has seen the faded journal with its broken line where the writer stopped when the shock came; an old Mexican newspaper containing the offer of a reward for the capture of the "Three Thieving Gentlemen," and many rare coins minted early in the century. When Valquez returns to his native country Thurston is to accompany him to examine for himself the riven cave where the frozen bandit slept fifty years. He believes Emilio Valquez to be ninety years old, and sees no reason why he should not live to be one hundred and forty.

# Mrs. Todd's Three-Flights-Front.*

BY RICHARD BARKER SHELTON.



RS. TODD'S lodging house was a model of its kind. It was on a quiet street, yet convenient to the cars, its rooms were commodious and well heated, and Mrs. Todd was the soul of cleanliness. The lodgers, too, were in keeping with the house — a married couple, a retired schoolteacher, one or two working women and several pleasant-spoken young men, who made little unnecessary noise and paid their rent promptly. All in all, fortune had smiled on Mrs. Todd since, in early widowhood, she had taken this lodging house as a means of livelihood. Yet there was one grain of anxiety in her cup of happiness.

"Three-flights-front," at the top of the house, was, to all appearances, a most desirable room. All day long the sun shone into it and its windows gave a pleasant outlook across the chimney pots of the houses opposite. It had a new carpet and very tidy curtains, but, despite these attractions, "three-flights-front" was seldom occupied for any length of time.

Various young men had rented it, and once a young woman had stayed in it for nearly three weeks. In each case, however, the lodger had decided to change quarters rather suddenly, and had sought out Mrs. Todd and more or less haltingly and shamefacedly had given his reason for leaving. The landlady was sure, from their actions, that they preferred to keep the real reason to themselves, though what it might be she was unable to surmise. Many times when the room was vacant she herself had occupied it for a night, but nothing occurred to disturb her in the least.

After the ninth occupant of the room had paid his rent in the middle of the week and departed, bag and baggage, she decided

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to sift the matter thoroughly. To this end she moved up to the front room at the top of the house, prepared to meet ghost or demon, or whatever it was that was depriving an honest woman of the rent of a good room. One morning, two weeks later, she moved down again, rather white and shaken.

"I shall never sleep in that room again," she said to Jane, her maid of all work, and as she would not discuss the matter further, it was dropped.

Thereafter, when prospective lodgers applied to her, if no other room was vacant, Mrs. Todd would say:

"I have one, three-flights-front, but really I don't believe you want it," and generally this was sufficient to send them away.

One day there came a brisk young man, and as the ill-starred room was the only one she had, Mrs. Todd made her usual response to his inquiry. The young man happened to be of the persistent type. He inquired the price and other particulars and ended by asking to see the room. He seemed quite satisfied with it. In fact, he so expressed himself in no uncertain terms. Mrs. Todd hesitated.

"Before you take it," said she, "I must tell you there's something — well, queer about it."

"Ghost?" said the young man, cheerfully. "If that's it, I'd like to meet him."

Mrs. Todd shook her head.

"Not exactly that," she said. "Still something decidedly unpleasant."

"Pshaw," said he, "there's nothing unpleasant about this room," and he handed out a week's rent.

In this way John Knox, medical student, began his occupancy of Mrs. Todd's "three-flights-front." A week — two weeks — went past, and nothing unusual occurred. Tuesday of the third week, Knox rapped on the parlor door. Mrs. Todd's face wore an anxious expression as he entered.

"I've found it," he said, laconically.

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Todd, "not the — the Noise?"

"Yes," answered Knox, tersely as usual, "gas globe!"

"Well, I declare!" said the landlady. "I never could locate it. How often have you heard it?"

"Twice," he replied. "First time I heard it was night before last. It started up that infernal drone about ten. Hunted all round before I could place it. Can't account for it. Can you?"

Mrs. Todd shook her head helplessly.

"At it again last night," Knox continued. "I shut off the gas and stuffed the globe with absorbent cotton. That stopped it. Then I got curious and took it out. Every time I unloaded the cotton, off it would go like the whine of a 'cello. Sometimes it swelled and sometimes it sank. Deuced if I could find out what made it. I'm not a bit superstitious, but I'll tell you frankly I somehow don't enjoy it."

Again Mrs. Todd shook her head. She half expected him to pay his rent and leave, as the rest had done. But Knox was of a different calibre and said:

"I'll buy another globe and see if it makes any difference."

Mrs. Todd brightened up.

The next day Knox brought up a similar globe and placed it over the gas burner. A few days later he again knocked at the parlor door.

"Same old tune," said he, and Mrs. Todd thought he looked a trifle pale. "Somehow this thing gets hold of me. Can't reason it out, you know. Funny thing, too. I don't seem to want to smash those globes. There's some sort of fascination listening to that whine."

"I know how it is," said Mrs. Todd, and she shivered. "Is it all the time?"

"No. Seems to take its own sweet will. It's liable to tune up any hour of the day or night."

"Mr. Knox," Mrs. Todd spoke with great effort, "there's a story that once, before I took this house, a musician had that room. He went insane and used to sit for hours playing one note on a 'cello — now loud, now soft. Afterwards, he shot himself — there in that very room. They say he'd play the keynote of a requiem, and every now and then he'd stop and listen for an echo, and laugh to himself. It may be exaggerated — "

"It's rot," said Knox, shortly, and turning on his heel he went up stairs. Yet, when the globe started up its drone early that evening, he felt cold chills running up and down his spine.

"What a timid ass you're getting to be, my boy," he said to himself as he rose and lighted a pipe with a hand that was a trifle unsteady. "Played the keynote," he said, musingly. "Rather a morbid fancy, that. Played the keynote — By George!" He stopped and laid aside the pipe. Suddenly he whipped off the globe, and donning his hat and overcoat he rushed down stairs carrying the troublesome globe under his arm. It was a frosty evening and the wind was blowing briskly. He hurried to a store on the avenue and asked for gas globes. A number of the ordinary shape were laid before him. He took a pencil from his pocket and sounded first his own globe and then the others. Presently he found one which rang a full note lower than his own. This he purchased and with it hastened back to the house.

He placed the original globe over the burner. In a moment it sent out a low whine. Then he tried his purchase. It was silent. He went down stairs and called Mrs. Todd.

"I have it," said he, and displayed the two globes. Then another inspiration came to him.

"Where's the skylight?" he asked.

Mrs. Todd took him into a hall closet and showed him a ladder running upwards. This he ascended, and went out on the roof. Presently he was back with a sigh of relief.

"Our ghostly musician," said he, "is a lot of wires running across the roof. There's a standard holding them just overhead. When it's windy, they begin to hum, and one of them drones the keynote of the gas globe here, and the vibrations, carried along the wall, set the globe going. That first globe I bought rang the same note as the original one, so you see that's why it tuned up also. This one is somewhat lower — most of them, I found, were pitched like the first one — and that's why it doesn't sing. Glad I know what it is."

"So am I," said Mrs. Todd, fervently.

They were silent for a moment. Then Knox spoke:

"Must have been creepy to see him do that, though. I wonder if he really did?"

# Old Man Hornbeck's Conversion.*

BY C. E. G. PEABODY.

IT was the spring of the year, and the wild flowers were running riot over the mesas as only the wild flowers of California can when once coaxed out by the warm spring rains. The wash, usually nothing but a sinuous streak of gleaming sand and rocky boulders, was now raised, by the melting snows in the mountains, to the dignity of a turbulent river. To the westward the Puente hills shone dimly through the scattering fog that the morning sun was driving before it. Over Welch's head on the swaying bough of a sugar gum a mocking bird sang merrily, bubbling now and then up into the air in a paroxysm of joy. Hobbling along the road like a gigantic grasshopper with the rheumatism came Seth Lane, a moving blot upon a peaceful landscape.

"Bin rollin' in the mud," said old Seth as, mud-incased, he paused before Welch and apologetically mopped his leathery face with a piece of flour sacking which, owing to the old man's rigid sense of economy, did duty for a handkerchief.

"So I see," said Welch, severely. "It would seem to me that an old man like —"

"Bin biddin' old man Hornbeck good-bye," interrupted Lane, blandly. "He's bin livin' down there by the bend near the wash."

"On the claylands?" asked Welch, absently.

"Yes, on them claylands," chuckled the old man. "He kim up here about four months ago from the Downey country, where he had been raisin' hogs an' alfalfa, an' doin' well, too. But he thought he wasn't makin' money fast enough, so he kim up here in the citrus belt, where he could git rich in a hurry. I rather liked Hornbeck when he first kim here, 'cause he was so straight-

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forward an' honest. Why, he is the only man I ever trusted in my life to buy my terbacker! There kim a time, however, when I had my faith somewhat shattered in him. But here I am tryin' to husk my pun'kins when I ain't even planted the seed yet; so I'll git back where the trail starts, an' commence right!

"You see, Hornbeck is one of them funny fellers what think that all men are honest because they are themselves. How in the name of tarnation a man kin grow up outside of a lunatic asylum an' hold on to that impression is beyond me! Well, he kim up here lookin' for an orange ranch an' Newby got hold of him. An' when Newby gits hold of a man you kin bet that somebody is gitting experience an' that it ain't Newby. Newby is one of them fellers what point with pride to the fact that they are still out of jail an' that their reputation for honesty is good among those who don't know 'em. When that man Newby comes around me walkin' on his toes like a cat, an' smellin' of hair oil an' cussedness, I always feel like holdin' my nose an' yellin' 'polecat!' He was an undertaker before the boom struck the country, an' then he went into the real-estate business, jes' like everybody else did. But like everybody else he didn't git ashamed of it an' quit when the boom busted, but hung on like the toothache when you are forty miles from a jawsmith! An' when the little church, that you kin see down there by them blue gums, got so poor that they couldn't afford to hire a preacher, Newby volunteered to fill the pulpit for what he could find on the plate. That wasn't much, but it gave him a certain genteel standin', an' that was what he was after. Religion is Newby's strong point. He always wears a face so long that when he eats dinner an' his mouth gits down to pie his nose has just commenced to smell the soup!

"Well, Newby nosed out Hornbeck just like a dog does a rat, an' the next thing I heard was that he had sold Hornbeck his ten-acre ranch down near the wash for $5,000, which was highway robbery, for I wouldn't give him ten cents for it, unless I could force some one I hated to take it for a gift. You know when a cat goes into a strange garret for the first time it sees a lot of holes an' cracks that look promisin', but what afterward turn out to be a delusion an' a snare! It was so with Hornbeck. He hadn't been here long before he commenced to look thoughtful

as if he was doin' a heap of thinkin', an' I saw right away that he had something on his mind. I had a pretty good idea what it was, too, for he wasn't the first man to see a great light in this settlement.

"'Seth,' said he one day to me, 'do you belong to the church?'

"'God bless my soul, Hornbeck!' said I, 'I never did a thing in my life that I was ashamed of, an' I never expect to! I ain't got anything to cover up, an' I pay my debts. What in the name of tarnation do I wanter jine the church for?'

"'Well,' said he, 'I'm kinder glad that you don't, 'cause I want some one to talk to that I kin trust, an' I have lost all faith in church members. Is that man Newby honest?'

"'Well,' said I, 'I saw Newby's grandmother yesterday an' she still had her false teeth! But then she knew Newby before she had any use for false teeth, an' I suppose she knows enough now to keep her mouth shut when Newby is around. If it wasn't for that, I'm bettin' that Newby would have them teeth!'

"'I asked him,' said Hornbeck, with risin' indignation, 'if them orange trees was all navels! an' he said they was.'

"'So they be,' said I, with a chuckle, 'but did Newby say anything about them bein' Australians trimmed in to look like the Washington navel?'

"'An' I asked him if the water right was a good one!' shouted Hornbeck, 'an' he said that it was just as good a right as my neighbor had, an' that *he raised ducks!*'

"'So he does,' said I, 'but did Newby say anything about them ducks bein' Pekins, what git along better without water?'

"'Seth,' said he, kinder solemn-like, 'all the money that I have is in this ranch, an' I can't afford to lose it.'

"'Hornbeck,' says I, 'you're stuck, an' there ain't no use denyin' it. Everybody around here knows it but you, an' it was time that you was graspin' the situation! Newby has bin tryin' to unload that claybank on some one for the last ten years! Look at them trees,' said I; 'nearly every one of them is a hoss marine, an' when they do bear, which ain't often, the fruit ain't worth pickin'. An' look at that soil! Why, there is a hard-pan under it that you can't break with a crowbar! I was here when Newby planted them trees, an' the only way he got a hole to put them in was

blowin' one out with dannymite! If you don't pour the fertilizer on them trees they will starve to death in a few years! They are turnin' yellow already! An' look at your water right,' said I. 'Why, I will guarantee to drink all the water you git this summer; an' what little you have is in the courts, an' the chances are that you will lose that. Them's plain facts, Hornbeck,' said I, 'an' it will do you good to think them over. Now there ain't but one thing for you to do. You can't expect to stay on this ranch an' make a livin'. You'd have to put more in it than you could ever dream of takin' off. Now what you want to do is to slick this place up an' put a gilt-edge polish on it. Then keep them hoss marines trimmed in to look like the real thing, an' sell out to the first tenderfoot sucker that comes along.'

"'But I can't do that,' said he. 'I never beat a man in my life, an' I'm too old to commence now.'

"'God bless my soul, Hornbeck!' said I, 'tenderfeet ain't men! It ain't no crime to rob a tenderfoot! That's what they're for! There's many a good man around here, to say nothin' of Newby, what would have to work for a livin' if it wasn't for tenderfeet. Honesty is the best policy when there is any danger of the other feller shootin'! But did you ever hear of a tenderfoot who knew which was the business end of a gun?' But it didn't make any difference what I said. Hornbeck wouldn't take my advice, an' I left him in disgust.

"Well, about two weeks later I saw Hornbeck again, an' he drew me aside an' said:

"'I've bin thinkin' the matter over, Seth, an' I've about come to the conclusion that I have been denyin' myself the consolation of religion in my old age.'

"Well, I laughed, an' laughed, an' laughed, an' then I commenced an' laughed all over again, for Hornbeck had a reputation for free thinkin' that had followed him and extended over three counties.

"'What's the joke?' said I, thinkin' that the real laugh was yet to come.

"'There ain't no joke,' said he, as solemn as an owl. 'I've seen the error of my ways, an' henceforth I walk the straight an' narrow way.'

"'Well,' said I, 'if you hold on to that ranch you will need all the religion you can git!'

"Well, sir, in spite of what he said to prepare me for what he knew would be an awful shock, you could have knocked me down with a feather when I heard that he had been to church. I didn't believe it even then, an' I didn't believe it for a fact till the next Sunday, when I saw him with my own eyes. An' then I couldn't help thinkin' that it was one of Hornbeck's jokes. But when I saw him drop a two-bit piece on the plate when it kim around I saw that it wasn't no joke an' that another good man had gone wrong! I don't think I ever let a thing worry me so much since I lost my bird dog. You never saw such a change come over a man in your life as came over Hornbeck when he got religion. Before that he would laugh an' joke an' tell a funny story with the best of us. But now he went around with his mouth droopin' down like a rainy moon, an' he had a way of lookin' at you an' shakin' his head an' groanin', an' then walkin' on, that made you feel like askin' who was dead. Next to Newby he was the biggest walkin' tombstone around here, an' I saw that Newby was gittin' a little nervous for fear that Hornbeck was after his job.

"Well, one Sunday I was comin' along the road, havin' bin huntin', when I met Hornbeck an' Newby on their way home from church.

"'A man of sin,' groaned Newby, rollin' his eyes like a coyote caught in a trap.

"'A brand to be rescued from the burnin',' said Hornbeck with a pious shudder.

"'Guess you'll find that this brand was burnt up long ago,' said I, with a grin.

"'Seth,' said Hornbeck, 'we are about to feed the inner man after a feast of the soul down at the church under the beautiful guidance of Brother Newby. Will you jine us, an' while we eat chicken listen to the beautiful thoughts that flow so gently from the lips of our dear friend an' brother?'

"Well, that word chicken caught me, an' I went along. Mrs. Hornbeck has a reputation for cookin', an' I knew I would be taken care of; besides I saw that Newby didn't want me along, so I went just to spite him. Well, sir, it was the funniest meal I

ever et! Newby would git a choice bit of chicken on his fork; then he would smack his lips an' start to put it in his mouth. But before he got it there Hornbeck would groan. Then, of course, Newby was in duty bound to pause an' groan, too. I'll be hanged if I think that Hornbeck allowed Newby to put more'n three mouthfuls in his mouth durin' the whole meal!

"Well, when the meal was over Hornbeck was seized with a regular fit of groanin'.

"'Brother,' said Newby, with a sickly smile, 'I fear that you have not laid all your burdens at the feet of the Lord?'

"'There is a heavy weight within me,' groaned Hornbeck, moving uneasily.

"'Conscience,' said Newby.

"'Indigestion,' said I.

"'Let the blessed spirit into thy heart,' groaned Newby; 'it will sweeten thy soul!'

"'Take a little soda, Hornbeck,' said I; 'it will sweeten thy stummick!'

"'Brother,' groaned Hornbeck, rollin' his eyes at Newby an' ignorin' me, 'I have had a terrible weight upon my soul ever since I jined the church an' saw the blessed light, an' I fear for the welfare of a dear friend of mine. I know he means all right now, no matter what his intentions may have been in the past; but he is in doubt how to make proper retribution. Some time ago this man discovered gold on the land of another. Now, instead of makin' his discovery known to the owner, he concealed the fact an' bought the land for what it was worth for farmin' purposes.'

"I saw Newby set up with a sudden start an' turn kinder green an' white around his gills. But I didn't know at that time that Hornbeck had dropped a gold nugget on the plate that mornin' at church.

"'Was it wrong for him to secure this land with the secret knowledge that he possessed?' asked Hornbeck, leanin' forward an' lookin' at Newby anxiously.

"'Wrong?' gasped Newby, holdin' up his hands in horror, 'why he will be lost forever unless he allows the poor man he robbed at least a portion of his ill-gotten gains!'

"'I'm in doubt, in doubt!' said Hornbeck, with a groan.

"'He's lost if he doesn't!' exclaimed Newby.

"'He's a dern fool if he does,' said I.

"Well, sir, for more'n four weeks every time that Newby would send the plate around Hornbeck would groan an' drop a gold nugget on it. An' every time that he done it Newby would twist an' squirm an' try to look pleasant, but he made a mighty poor job of it. I'm hanged if I didn't git in the habit of goin' to church every Sunday just to see Newby squirm.

"Well, I saw the whole thing then, just as plain as day. Hornbeck had discovered gold on the Newby ranch before he bought it. It didn't surprise me much, for it lays up agin the mountains, an' I've always said that they would find gold around there somewhere. But what tickled me was the fact that Hornbeck was cute enough to keep it still an' git Newby to let the place go under the impression that he was sellin' it to a sucker. Well, sir, when I really grasped the situation I laughed till I thought I would bust! An' every time I saw Newby I would hold my sides an' laugh agin. An' then Newby would shake his head an' groan, an' then pass on like a man goin' to his own funeral. But what worried me was Hornbeck gittin' religion, for when a man gits religion as bad as Hornbeck did there is no tellin' where he is goin' to break out at. I saw that Newby's game was to work upon Hornbeck until he made him think that it was his duty to give the ranch back, an' I couldn't see no way of headin' him off, for every time that I tried to speak to Hornbeck about it, and tell him not to make a fool of himself, he would commence groanin' an' keep it up till I left him in disgust.

"Well, sir, the way that Newby went at Hornbeck was beautiful to see. He preached a series of powerful sermons on 'The Curse of Wealth,' 'Legal Dishonesty' an' 'Moral Theft'; an' every one of them was aimed straight at Hornbeck, who would twist an' squirm around on his seat. An' never once did he miss droppin' a gold nugget on the plate, an' once when the sermon was extra powerful I saw him drop two.

"Well, yesterday Hornbeck looked me up an' asked me to come up an' take dinner with him.

"'Is that coyote goin' to be there?' said I, meanin' Newby.

"'A good an' moral man!' groaned Hornbeck. 'An' we're goin' to have chicken, Seth,' he added.

"'Coyote an' chicken don't mix except to become coyote,' said I.

"'Seth,' said he, earnestly, 'come up just as a favor to me.'

"'All right,' said I, 'I'll come to oblige you; besides, it would be a shame if you had to throw away any of that chicken!'

"Well, sir, what I saw an' heard there nearly took away my appetite for chicken. We hadn't got more'n fairly started before Newby commenced to worry Hornbeck by insinuatin' that his mansion in the skies had a mortgage on it, an' that it would be just as well to lift it before he moved in. I set right across from Newby, an' I managed to git in one good kick on his shins, but he kept them out of the way after that, an' I had to set there an' eat chicken, powerless to help myself. Well, finally Hornbeck broke down an' commenced sobbin' like a child, while I felt like wringin' that miserable Newby's neck. I made up my mind that I would do it, too, just as soon as the chicken was all gone!

"'O brother, brother,' sobbed Hornbeck,' if I hadn't found it! If I hadn't found it! If I could only git down to the Downey country an' spend the rest of my life workin' among them poor lost souls down there, I might be almost happy an' forget the dark, dark page of my life! Oh, if I hadn't found it! If I hadn't found it!'

"'Well, now that you have found it,' said I, in disgust, 'you had better hang on to it.'

"'Why don't you go down to the Downey country an' carry the light to the poor lost souls?' asked Newby, watchin' Hornbeck as a dog does a rat.

"'I can't,' he groaned. 'This ranch hangs like a millstone around my neck! If I was only free I would gladly go.'

"'Brother,' said Newby, as if struck by a sudden thought, 'why not sell the ranch? I would buy it myself if I thought it would further the blessed cause of religion.'

"'Brother,' sobbed Hornbeck, seizin' hold of Newby's hand an' wringin' it, 'if you would it would make me the happiest man on the face of the earth! I feel it in my heart that it should belong to you of all persons!'

"'About the price, brother?' asked Newby, with a purr of satisfaction.

"'Well,' said Hornbeck, with a deep sigh, 'I gave you $5,000 for it, you know, an' I have made some improvements. Say $5,500, an' I will be free to move to the Downey country an' save souls.'

"'See here, Hornbeck,' I began, when Newby cut me short.

"'You're a man of sin!' said he, piously. 'Shall we close the bargain, brother?'

"'Hornbeck,' said I, 'you're a dern —'

"'Let not thy angry passions rise,' said Newby, with a groan. 'Shall I draw the papers, brother?'

"'I'll give you $6,000, Hornbeck!' I shouted.

"'Seth,' said he, earnestly, 'I would prefer to have this ranch pass into the hands of a godly man. If you would jine the church an' —'

"'I'll give you —'

"'Draw up the papers, brother,' said he, turnin' sadly to Newby, 'the tempter is abroad an' I may fall.'

"Well, sir, I'm derned if that miserable Newby didn't have a deed all ready drawn with the exception of the price! I grabbed my hat an' was leavin' in disgust when Hornbeck asked me to remain an' take his acknowledgment. I'm a justice of the peace, you know. I refused at first, but he said he would give me a dollar if I would, an' as I knew that it would be my only chance to git any of the derned fool's money I consented, although it did grind me to see that miserable Newby gittin' such a snap.

"'For the last time, Hornbeck,' said I, as I took up the pen, 'I'll give you —'

"'You're a man of sin!' groaned Newby.

"'Turn from thy evil ways an' see the blessed light!' groaned Hornbeck, in turn.

"That settled it! I took the dern addle-pated idiot's acknowledgment, an' fled.

"Well, this mornin' I went up to bid him good-bye an' collect the dollar that he owed me. I'm always willin' to trust a man till he gits religion, an' then I demand cash! I wasn't any too soon, for Hornbeck, with all his household goods loaded on a lumber